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25 October 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Personnel

FROM : Thomas Polgar
Chief, Personnel Management
Directorate of Operations

SUBJECT : Agency-wide Vacancy Notice System

REFERENCE : Your memorandum, dated 13 October
1978, same Subject

1. We concur fully with your statement that the establishment of a broad and mandatory Vacancy Notice System which crosses Career Service lines does raise questions for personnel management in several areas. Quite frankly, we foresee enormous complications, particularly with respect to staffing the Operations Directorate's positions abroad if the essential rotation of personnel, in itself a difficult undertaking, were to be contingent on the workings of an Agency-wide vacancy notification and subsequent results thereof. We would anticipate problems of timeliness, cover, security and insufficient opportunities for appropriate training as well as longer-term difficulties with career planning and management, competitive evaluations and rankings, and continuity of performance.

2. We certainly could not agree to a concept that all supergrade or even supergrade manager positions in the Directorate be subject to a mandatory Agency-wide Vacancy Notice System. Most supergrade officers in the Directorate are managers as well as operational specialists and have achieved supergrade status as a result of about 20 years of specialized training and on-the-job experience. They have demonstrated particularly the quality of operational

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judgment, which comes from a combination of personality traits and experience in operations. While we doubt not that there are many supergrades in the other Directorates who could match the educational and intellectual qualifications of our supergrades, they would lack nuts-and-bolts knowledge of operations which can only be acquired through personal engagement in the operational process. A supergrade station chief abroad or a division officer in Headquarters is expected to have not only an understanding of operational principles and techniques but also the ability to guide and develop his junior officers by indoctrinating them with the distillate of his own experience. If he himself were to lack that experience, how could he teach it to his juniors? In sum, most supergrades in the Agency outside the Operations Directorate would not be qualified to positions of operational supervision.

3. Basically the same arguments speak against any plan to include in such an Agency-wide mandatory notification system "all positions, regardless of category, grade or Career Service designation." Again, we must point out that the majority of our operational personnel are operational specialists, often with essential linguistic qualifications.

4. While it may seem to be more practical to handle on an Agency-wide basis the assignments to positions which have a subcategory code common to most of the Career Services, such as secretaries and other clericals, even in their cases we can foresee difficulties in phasing into and out of the overseas rotation cycle. This could be managed, however, with sufficient lead time. We would require clarification on how career management aspects would be handled for personnel who may be wandering from one Directorate to another, how they would be counted against promotion headroom, and indeed how we could ensure that evaluation panels would give them a fair shake. In sum, plenty of problems even with the relatively easier categories.

5. In considering the above, let's not lose sight of the fact that we are wholeheartedly in favor

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of rotation where it contributes to the interests of the Agency or clearly serves the career enhancement of the individual. At any given time we have a significant number of "D" careerists serving with other Directorates. We have had a particularly fruitful, continuing two-way exchange with NFAC. Most recently we acquired on rotational basis a scientifically trained officer for a field position in Brazil. We have utilized and look forward to responses from secretaries in other Directorates interested in serving abroad -- but not merely in Western Europe. On a selective basis, and with sufficient lead time, we can handle the training, cover and other administrative requirements. We do think, however, that it is fundamental for the discharge of Career Service responsibilities for the Career Service to be able to plan well ahead the rotation of its personnel, to ensure that personnel going abroad are appropriately qualified, and above all to be certain of a continuing source of supply.

6. A lot more could be written about the complex questions you raised, but we would like to suggest that it might be useful for you to call a conference of senior officers representing each of the Directorates to delineate the scope of the problems and to see if there may be at least a partial platform to which we could all agree.



Thomas Polgar

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cc: ADDO

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